

**§ 10.48 Sharing legal fees.**

A practitioner or a firm of practitioners shall not share legal fees with a non-practitioner except that:

(a) An agreement by a practitioner with the practitioner's firm, partner, or associate may provide for the payment of money, over a reasonable period of time after the practitioner's death, to the practitioner's estate or to one or more specified persons.

(b) A practitioner who undertakes to complete unfinished legal business of a deceased practitioner may pay to the estate of the deceased practitioner that proportion of the total compensation which fairly represents the services rendered by the deceased practitioner.

(c) A practitioner or firm of practitioners may include non-practitioner employees in a compensation or retirement plan, even though the plan is based in whole or in part on a profit-sharing arrangement, providing such plan does not circumvent another Disciplinary Rule.

[50 FR 5172, Feb. 6, 1985, as amended at 58 FR 54511, Oct. 22, 1993]

**§ 10.49 Forming a partnership with a non-practitioner.**

A practitioner shall not form a partnership with a non-practitioner if any of the activities of the partnership consist of the practice of patent, trademark, or other law before the Office.

**§§ 10.50–10.55 [Reserved]****§ 10.56 Canon 4.**

A practitioner should preserve the confidences and secrets of a client.

**§ 10.57 Preservation of confidences and secrets of a client.**

(a) "Confidence" refers to information protected by the attorney-client or agent-client privilege under applicable law. "Secret" refers to other information gained in the professional relationship that the client has requested be held inviolate or the disclosure of which would be embarrassing or would be likely to be detrimental to the client.

(b) Except when permitted under paragraph (c) of this section, a practitioner shall not knowingly:

(1) Reveal a confidence or secret of a client.

(2) Use a confidence or secret of a client to the disadvantage of the client.

(3) Use a confidence or secret of a client for the advantage of the practitioner or of a third person, unless the client consents after full disclosure.

(c) A practitioner may reveal:

(1) Confidences or secrets with the consent of the client affected but only after a full disclosure to the client.

(2) Confidences or secrets when permitted under Disciplinary Rules or required by law or court order.

(3) The intention of a client to commit a crime and the information necessary to prevent the crime.

(4) Confidences or secrets necessary to establish or collect the practitioner's fee or to defend the practitioner or the practitioner's employees or associates against an accusation of wrongful conduct.

(d) A practitioner shall exercise reasonable care to prevent the practitioner's employees, associates, and others whose services are utilized by the practitioner from disclosing or using confidences or secrets of a client, except that a practitioner may reveal the information allowed by paragraph (c) of this section through an employee.

**§§ 10.58–10.60 [Reserved]****§ 10.61 Canon 5.**

A practitioner should exercise independent professional judgment on behalf of a client.

**§ 10.62 Refusing employment when the interest of the practitioner may impair the practitioner's independent professional judgment.**

(a) Except with the consent of a client after full disclosure, a practitioner shall not accept employment if the exercise of the practitioner's professional judgment on behalf of the client will be or reasonably may be affected by the practitioner's own financial, business, property, or personal interests.

(b) A practitioner shall not accept employment in a proceeding before the Office if the practitioner knows or it is obvious that the practitioner or another practitioner in the practitioner's firm ought to sign an affidavit to be